

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

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My Dear Sir

Josiah Warren

March 12, 1853

*This is a letter in Warren's bold, flowing hand, dated "Thompson's Station, Long Island, New York [i.e. Modern Times]. March 12, /53. It is addressed to a person in England, whom one might speculate is A.C. Cuddon. (At the end of **True Civilization**, Warren suggests that people responding in England address their correspondence to Cuddon). A surprising moment comes at the end, when Warren says of the spiritualist movement then sweeping his circle "it is no delusion." A few of Warren's letters are preserved at the University of Michigan. All but this one are, in the copies I obtained, illegible due to bleed-through.*

Josiah Warren
My Dear Sir
March 12, 1853

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With much pleasure I received your interesting letter of the 15th Feb.

There is no danger of your "becoming tedious" and if I don't always respond immediately to your valuable communications, I pray you attribute to a pressure of other matters, or to anything rather than indifference.

Mr. [Stephen Pearl] Andrews was here just in time to see your letter, and sat down immediately and wrote to you, which will ren-

der much that I might say, unnecessary. I would very gladly enter minutely into the consideration of the points at issue between Antient and Modern Times, but I could not do so with much less space or labor than such as are embodied in the works already printed. One element of society is so connected with another that neither can be detached or abstracted from the other without danger to the whole. One wheel of a coach will not carry us on our journey. We must have the whole coach and the horses too, and all must move together; and I feel a degree of timidity in attempting to move any one part without the others.

Mr Andrews, who is the publisher of the works on "Equity," will see that you have a supply as early as possible.

Yes "such leaders as [?] Chambers are positively destroying all correct notions of right and wrong." The lead must be taken out of such hands. The order must be reversed — or rather order must supersede disorder. Those who have heretofore been followers must be the leaders — the leaders must become followers — "The last must be first and the first, last." The most astonishing thing to see, since I have understood the world's wants, is the amazing ignorance with which it has been led and governed! and I have found in practice, the very best appreciators and leaders of Equity among those who were in humble positions and who seemed totally unconscious of their superiority. And we have found those who are ambitious to lead to be the most incapable of it, and the most troublesome of any.

You will learn more of my printing inventions now, as I am making them more public than ever; because I have not till now obtained all the results which I aimed at. I wish I could at once put you in possession of them, but this cannot be done by any means short of personal example and instruction. I will from time to time send you proofs that I have attained the means of printing from type without the expensive and tedious process of setting type; and I invite you to take the earliest opportunity of getting the art and the materials among you. I have already a patent half through your

English law machinery — this was done more to prevent its being monopolised in that country than for any other purpose. I wonder if some of you could not complete this, and make it profitable, as well as remuneration to me? But some one must come here and learn it practically, or someone must carry it over to you. At present, no person but myself knows the process, nor would they by any quantity of experiments be likely to find out all that is indispensable to the result. I have had these experiments in hand twenty three years!

I see, by your remarks on “land tenures” that you do not fully grasp the whole of our issue with the world’s wrong. You would have the land a national interest, a combined interest, a common property. Now the most prominent point we make against all the world’s institutions and practices and against all the reforms is that we entirely repudiate all common or combined or partnership interests and consequently all national or state interests; and insist upon it that all interests must be thoroughly individualized before society can begin to be harmonious.

Of course, with us, there can be no such a thing as a nation or state. There should be only the family of mankind — each individual managing his own affairs supremely and absolutely, but equitably, with his fellow man. The ownership of the soil for the sake of order and harmony, for the sake of disposing with legislation, must be absolute in the individual, guaranteed by a public sense of justice, the purchases and sales of it being conducted upon the cost principle, which remunerates only the labor in the transaction; [this] destroys all landlordism, profitmongering, or usury as based upon traffic in the soil. I admit that land tenures are a fundamental consideration and we not the means of completely and harmoniously adjusting them, I should not now be writing to you from this place where something like a thousand acres are sold or for sale to settlers, without a dollar of profit beyond an equitable compensation for the labor of purchasing, surveying, making deeds, &c. I respectfully and affectionately invite you and your friends to look

into this and study it, till you see in it all that you desire, and more than you expect.

I thank you for the handbill. My blood has boiled and trembled in my veins at every word of the movements of the noble Kossuth and Mazzini, but at the same time, at best I could but consider that their mission was to plough up the soil, to disencumber it of rocks and trees.¹ The planting and culture is necessarily the mission of others.

In all this I often feel envious to know how the present rulers of the earth would receive "Equity" were it once made known to them. It is certainly no more at issue with them, than it is with what is generally called Reform. The strongest argument for despotism is founded upon individuality, which is the first corner stone of Equity, and which asserts the absolute right of despotism in every individual over his own, while despotic governments assert it only for a few, and this from the absolute necessity of despotic power where there is any power at all. To have no governmental power at all, there should be no public interests to manage. All interests must become individualized before we can dispense with governments or despotisms. This disintegration of interests is a new proposition. It is precisely the opposite in principle to reforms which have failed and been rejected and opposed by the governments as the elements of disorder and "insecurity." The governments are right in this view of the ordinary reforms and I therefore feel anxious to know how they treat Equity when it comes to be made known. It really seems to me to be the platform upon which rulers and ruled can amicably meet, shake hands, and weep over the past or look forward to the future with a feeling of inexpressible joy.

¹ Lajos (Louis) Kossuth (1802–1894) was a Hungarian politician and liberal dissident, widely beloved of 19th-century reformers. Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872) was a leader in democracy and independence movements in Italy.

I have not yet received the pamphlets, which I much regret. I thank you for sending them and shall be glad to read them, but think you will not need my opinion on them after you have read and understood all our positions, for they seem to be a kind of standing criticism on all reform propositions.

Yes, I believe I have had as good opportunities to examine the spiritual development as any one, the result of all of which is, that I would advise any one to take all convenient opportunities to *examine for himself*, for no description of other persons can do the subject or the enquirer justice. I would not advise you to incur much expense in this, as it cannot be long before plenty of opportunities will be presented to every one without expense. It is no imposture, nor is it a delusion.

Affectionately,
Josiah Warren
(write again soon)